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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State
DEPT PASS: MEXICO, SAN SALVADOR, MANAGUA, TEGUCIGALPA,
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EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: GT, PINS, SHUM, PORS

FACRC/DA/WC

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FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

DATE: December 1976

SUBJECT: Monthly Report on Political Violence and Human Rights: November 1976

REF :

SUMMARY: Press reported incidents of probable political violence rose to 25 in November. The EGP, in its most successful month to date, burned 10 private aircraft, set off a bomb in a major tourist hotel, took over an American-owned oil camp, shot down a Guatemalan Army helicopter and killed two prominent rightists. In addition the PGT/FAR demonstrated in two incidents, including the burning of two fincas and one assassination, that it has returned to the terrorist scene. A scandal that began in October with the arrest of several members of the Corps of Detectives for alleged extortion now appears to be leading to a major shakeup of the Corps. END SUMMARY. Press reported incidents of probable political violence rose to 25 in November, including 12 killings, following the unusually "peaceful" month of October when only 15 incidents occurred. Activity was heaviest in Guatemala City with 7 incidents and 5 killings, the South Coast with 8 incidents and 2 killings, and Chiquimula in the Oriente with 7 incidents and 4 killings.

Big Month for the EGP

Unfortunately, however, the figures are misleading in their overall impression because there were more major incidents of political violence in November than in any other month in over a year. Of particular concern is the significant increase in EGP activity this month. The Guerrilla Army of the Poor conducted major operations in Guatemala City, northern Quiché, Chiquimula, and the South Coast, thereby

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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demonstrating once again that they are capable of striking almost anywhere in Guatemala.

On November 6 the EGP blew up the eighth floor of the Conquistador Sheraton Hotel (see Guatemala 7620). Five hotel employees were wounded (despite the five injured this attack is being counted as one incident, that of bombing). Then on November 12, some 30 heavily armed guerrillas took over the town of Olopa in the eastern department of Chiquimula for over an hour and "executed" two prominent ranchers, including the long-time head of the military commissioners in the area.

On November 20 a group of 50-60 heavily armed guerrillas, the largest assemblage of EGP to date, took over a finca in Escuintla belonging to the prominent right-wing family Arzu (Alvaro Arzu is a close confidant of MLN leader Alejandro Maldonado) and proceeded to burn 10 aircraft used in pesticide spraying in the area. The EGP left behind literature in which they stated that the aircraft were destroyed as a reprisal for the deaths of several campesinos from pesticide poisoning. (The press had carried a number of stories about these deaths in which improper spraying procedures were blamed.)

One week later on November 26 some 30-50 EGP guerrillas took over an oil drilling camp of the Shenandoah Oil Company in the extreme northwest corner of El Quiché and after giving a propaganda lecture to the Guatemalan employees forced down one Guatemalan Air Force helicopter bringing supplies and damaged a second helicopter (see Guatemala 8045 and A-152).

Except for the Sheraton bombing incident all of the above incidents involved at least 30 guerrillas and demonstrate that the EGP is stronger and better organized than heretofore believed, for only twice before - once in the Oriente and once on the South Coast - have the EGP operated in groups this large. The EGP's selection of their targets - rich finqueros, a known right-wing hotel owner, a foreign oil company, and military commissioners - will undoubtedly strike some sympathetic chords among dissident and dissatisfied elements in the large poor majority. That they have already picked up some new support was demonstrated in the Shenandoah attack when for the first time a significant number of indigenas were sighted among the guerrillas. Heretofore the guerrillas had enjoyed very little success among this group.

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[REDACTED] the EGP's destruction of one Army helicopter and damaging of a second constitutes the heaviest (and most expensive) direct blow yet to the Guatemalan Army.

Not Only That But the PGT/FAR...As if one active terrorist group were not enough November witnessed the resurgence of the PGT/FAR (see October violence report).

[REDACTED] this terrorist group is believed to have been definitely responsible for two attacks, the assassination of a prominent businessman in Retalhuleu on November 3 and the burning of two sugar fincas in Escuintla on November 16 with damage estimated at \$70,000-100,000. In addition they were possibly responsible for the gunning down and killing of two mobile military policemen in Guatemala City on November 17.

Castellanos and Paiz

The Castellanos family appears to have given up its campaign, at least temporarily, of open letters in the press to embarrass the Laugerud administration into releasing Mario. The last open letter appeared on November 3. However, as if to fill the ensuing vacuum, the Kong and Paiz families (the two families involved in the Pescador Restaurant shootout reported last month) have been going at each other almost daily in the press with paid notices. Meanwhile Kong is still awaiting trial following a jurisdictional scuffle between the civil and military courts.

Corps of Detectives Shakeup

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In the past few months, however, several members of the Corps have been arrested for attempted extortion and it now appears that these initial arrests are only the beginning. Minister of Government Donaldo Alvarez, under whose portfolio the police fall, has confirmed that seven senior members of the Corps, including one who was due to leave for Washington in early January for a DEA training course, have been fired for corruption and that he expects that there will be a continuing series of changes within the Corps.

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